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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is the relationship between superintendents and principals and their collaborative approach to improving administrative performance. The research for this study was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, the Performance Rating Scale, which assesses the administrative performance of the school principal, was developed. Five general categories of competency emerged and were used as a basis for the analysis of the data: leadership, educational, interpersonal, managerial, and professional. The second phase of the study consisted of the development, implementation, and assessment of an evaluative process. The process utilized the instrument developed in phase 1 to establish goals and objectives that were cooperatively determined by the superintendent and the principal. A Likert-scale questionnaire was completed by each principal and superintendent. The results were related to strength/weakness identification, the planning conference, the work plan, interim and summative conferences, and the overall process. (SI)

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INTRODUCTION

For the past few decades, a great deal of time and effort have been devoted to the process of supervising and evaluating teachers. While teacher evaluation has become a meaningful tool for instructional improvement, the evaluation of principals has remained virtually unchanged.

In recent years, there have been several federal and state reports concerning education in the United States, ..High School by Boyer, A Place Called School : Prospects for the Future by Goodlad, A Nation At Risk by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, Action for Excellence by the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, to name a few. All of these reports and many others identify the pivotal role of the principal in effective schools. Principals must provide the necessary leadership to address all of the issues which education is facing today and to pull together the separate elements which exist in every school and make them work. Principals are responsible for the educational quality of our schools.

Business and industry have led in the development of comprehensive management appraisal processes. Education, on the other hand, has very little experience with assessing administrative performance and when it has been done it is usually done in isolation, unrelated to the current research and focused on nebulous administrative qualities.

On a more personal note, I have very vivid recollections, when I was both an assistant principal and a high school principal, of the evaluation procedures which were used. Well meaning supervisors, my principal when I was an assistant and my superintendent when I was a principal, met with me in June to tell me how well I performed during the year and to give to me a written evaluation. When I was an assistant principal, the evaluation was a narrative based upon what the principal wished to elaborate upon. When I was a principal, in a different district, the evaluation was a narrative based upon a job description which contained five general categories. I remember, in both situations, feeling good about what the evaluations said about me but wondering

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how I could do my job even better. Both supervisors cared about me and cared about the educational program we were offering to our students; but neither one of them had a process they could utilize which would help me to grow and become an even better administrator.

The necessity for principals to become involved in professional growth and self improvement activities is something that we know intuitively is important and which is stated over and over again in the literature on administration.

The establishment of a formal system for the assessment of a principal's performance was critical for several reasons. First, the role of building principal must be clarified so that the principal understands what is expected. Second, goals and objectives must be delineated in order for the principal to determine his/her own priorities. Last, the principal must be encouraged to change his/her behaviors whenever appropriate.

The Administrative Appraisal Process and its accompanying instrument, the Performance Rating Scale, which were developed, implemented and evaluated in this study were based upon the premise that the administrator who is being evaluated must have an opportunity to engage in a continuous process of evaluation in which goals and objectives are established from known, concrete criteria. The assessment tool developed and evaluated during the first part of the study, the Performance Rating Scale, provides these know, concrete criteria. The Administrative Appraisal Process emphasizes the importance of the establishment of goals and objectives since individuals and organizations must have goals and purposes if they are to be productive. If organizational expectations are clear to a principal, it is more likely that the principal will be able to achieve these expectations.

The Administrative Appraisal Process also emphasizes that goals and objectives be determined cooperatively by the principal and the superintendent. A principal's involvement in determining his/her own goals and objectives will lead to a greater commitment to achieve them.

The purposes of the Administrative Appraisal Process are

- -to encourage communication within the organization;
- -to facilitate mutual goal setting between the school principal and the superintendent;
- -to foster a commitment to mutually developed objectives;
- -to encourage the systematic annual evaluation of the school principal by the superintendent of schools;
- -to sensitize the evaluator to the needs and problems of the principal;

-to encourage the evaluator to provide assistance to the principal;
-and to motivate the principal towards self-improvement.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research for this study was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, a valid and reliable instrument, the Performance Rating Scale, was developed which assesses the administrative performance of the school principal. The instrument which is completed by the principal and the superintendent assists them in determining areas of strength and weakness in the principal's performance. The second phase of the study consisted of the development, implementation, and assessment of an evaluative process which utilizes the developed instrument to establish goals and objectives which are cooperatively determined by the superintendent and the principal.

PHASE 1 - PERFORMANCE RATING SCALE

The procedure used to develop the Performance Rating Scale was multifaceted. Initially, a thorough review of concepts, theories, and approaches related to administrative performance was conducted in order to determine which administrative characteristics contribute to a principal's performance.

During the last three decades or more, researchers have studied the role of the building principal. Research has been conducted in areas such as the function of the principal by Heller, Blumberg & Greenfield, Paddock, and Look & Manatt. Competencies and skills which must be possessed by a principal have been studied by Jenson, Campbell, Heller, Hersey & associates, and Freeland. Effective principals and effective schools have been analyzed extensively by Weber, Brookover, Rutter, Duke, and Bossert and their associates.

By regrouping and relabeling areas of competency identified in this research of the last three decades, five general categories of competency emerged.

The first category, LEADERSHIP, can be described as the principal's ability to guide the members of the school community in accomplishing the goals and objectives of the school.

The second general category, EDUCATIONAL, can be defined as the principal's ability to provide direction and supervision to the instructional program.

INTERPERSONAL, the third category, includes the principal's ability to understand, interact, and communicate with all members of the school community.

The fourth category, MANAGERIAL, can be described as the principal's ability to control the day to day operations of the school.

And the fifth category, PROFESSIONAL, includes the principal's ability to improve his/her own knowledge and status.

After these five general categories were identified, I was then able to develop and field test the Performance Rating Scale.

An item pool of over two hundred items was developed. The items where either written from information gathered from the literature or taken from instruments which are utilized in school districts in the states of New York, New Jersey, Texas, Illinois, Virginia, and Tennessee.

The statements included in the item pool were presented to a panel of judges which consisted of a superintendent of schools, four principals, and three curriculum supervisors. The judges, working independently, were asked to categorize each item into the areas of educational competency, leadership competency, interpersonal competency, professional competency, managerial competency, and other. If an item was identified as being in the same category by at least eighty percent of judges, the item was included in the revised item pool.

The revised item pool of 79 items was then presented to another group of judges, doctoral students in educational administration. The five items which did not achieve an 80% rating by this second set of judges were rewritten to correct problems of length and/or intelligibility.

To further clarify and improve the Performance Rating Scale prior to the final administration of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted in June of 1986. Four superintendents and sixteen of their principals volunteered to participate in the pilot study. Utilizing a Likert scale where 1 indicated unsatisfactory performance, 2 marginal performance, 3 satisfactory performance, 4 above average performance, and 5 indicated outstanding performance, the principal and superintendents completed all 79 items on the instrument. The principal completed a self assessment while the superintendent completed an assessment based upon his/her knowledge of the principal's performance.

The pilot study provided information concerning confusing items. The respondents, the principals and superintendents, were given the opportunity to critique the items in the instrument and to make recommendations for improvement in the wording of items, the order of presentation of the items, and the format of the instrument.

The final version of the Performance Rating Scale contained 74 items. The Leadership subscale contained 14 items, the Educational subscale 15 items, the Interpersonal subscale 12 items, the Professional subscale 14 items and the Managerial subscale 19 items.

In addition, school superintendents were asked to write brief narrative descriptions of the strengths and weaknesses of each evaluated principal and to place the principals in rank order according to their overall performance in each of the five competencies assessed by the instrument. Principals were also asked to write brief descriptions of their strengths and weaknesses and to rank order their performance in each of the same five competencies. The information obtained from these descriptions and the analysis of the rank order information was used to establish criterion and construct validity for the instrument.

ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR PERFORMANCE RATING SCALE

SPSS, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Frequency and Reliability programs were utilized to analyze the data obtained from this pilot study. In addition, item analyses were performed to determine the consistency and the variance among the responses. Items were reviewed based upon their correlations to subscale scores and to the total score.

Initially, the means and standard deviations for each item in the total scale and in each subscale were calculated to determine if each item discriminated along the scale of unsatisfactory performance, value of 1 , to outstanding performance, value of 5. An analysis of this data revealed that respondents believed that the principals' performance was satisfactory or better. Since the respondents may have anticipated that the results could be used in an evaluative way, the responses may have been biased toward the higher end of the scale.

Utilizing SPSS Reliability, the internal consistency of the instrument was demonstrated by obtaining Cronbach-alpha coefficients. The reliability coefficient for the TOTAL SCALE was 0.98. The alpha coefficients for each SUBSCALE were

Educational 0.96,
Leadership 0.93,

Interpersonal 0.89,
Professional 0.95,
and Managerial 0.95.

In addition to obtaining reliability coefficients for the total scale and subscales for the entire pilot study population, reliability coefficients were also calculated for the principals and superintendents separately. The TOTAL scale alpha coefficient was 0.98 for the superintendents and 0.96 for the principals. The alpha coefficients for each of the SUBSCALES, for the superintendents and principals respectively, were

Educational	0.97 and 0.94;
Leadership	0.95 and 0.88;
Interpersonal	0.92 and 0.75;
Professional	0.96 and 0.98;
Managerial	0.97 and 0.91.

In order to establish item-to-scale homogeneity, Corrected Item-Total Correlations for the total scale and for each of the subscales were studied. Utilizing the statistics obtained for each of the subscales, it was determined that each of the items in each of the subscales measured the attribute which was measured by the subscale.

Finally, the reliability contribution of an individual item with each of the subscale reliabilities and with the total scale reliability was calculated utilizing the If Item Deleted technique. It was determined that each item contributed to the internal consistency of each subscale and the total scale.

Based upon the analyses of the means and standard deviations of each item, the corrected item total correlations, the If Item Deleted reliabilities, and the alpha reliability coefficients, the reliability of the Performance Rating Scale was established.

Content validity for the Performance Rating Scale was established primarily by using the modified Q-sort technique. The content of the items was examined by a panel of judges to ensure that the items were a representative collection of the existing body of knowledge.

Criterion validity was established by utilizing the "known-group" method. The superintendents' and principals' narrative descriptions of strengths and weaknesses and the rank order information which they provided during the pilot study were compared to the subscale and total scale scores on the Performance Rating Scale.

There was 88% agreement between the written descriptions and the scores on the instrument.

For approximately 80% of the principals, there was at least 80% congruence between the self assessment results on the Performance Rating Scale and the rank order self assessment.

For 50% of the superintendents, there was 100% agreement between the superintendents' assessment and the Performance Rating Scale. For the other 50%, there was 80% congruence.

PHASE 2 - ADMINISTRATIVE APPRAISAL PROCESS

The development of the Administrative Appraisal Process also consisted of several steps. After a comprehensive review of the literature on managerial evaluation programs and existing processes for setting goals and objectives, the Administrative Appraisal Process was developed. The identification of needs, the development of goals and objectives, the establishment of work plans, the conducting of interim and summative conferences were incorporated into the process.

During the FIRST step of the process, the principal and his/her superintendent utilize the Performance Rating Scale to identify areas of strength and weakness in the principal's performance.

A planning conference at which performance goals and objectives are determined is the SECOND step.

During the THIRD step, work plans which include goals, objectives, related activities, resources, and evaluative criteria are established cooperatively by the principal and the superintendent.

Interim conferences, at which the progress of the work plans are discussed, is the FOURTH step.

Finally, during the FIFTH step, a summative conference is held at which the status of each work plan is reviewed. Since this step can be the first step of the appraisal process for the next year, the Performance Rating Scale can be administered again and its results used to analyze areas in which growth or improvement have taken place.

During the 1986 - 1987 school year, eight superintendents and thirty seven principals from Long Island, New York agreed to participate in the study. Of the thirty seven principals, there were 19 elementary school principals, 9 middle/junior high school principals, and 9 senior high school principals. The eight school districts included in

the study had diversified organizational patterns and principals with diversified characteristics of years of service as an administrator, degrees earned, sex and age.

ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR ADMINISTRATIVE APPRAISAL PROCESS

For the Administrative Appraisal Process, the analysis of the data focused primarily on the feasibility of the steps in the process.

In June of 1987, each of the principals and superintendents, who utilized the process throughout the school year, completed a questionnaire which evaluated the feasibility of each of the steps in the process as well as the feasibility of the overall process. The questionnaire which contained twenty questions asked the respondents to rate each of the steps in the process on a five point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree.

For the FIRST step, in which the principal and superintendent utilize the Performance Rating Scale to identify the principal's strengths and weaknesses,

over 80% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the scale helped the principal in the identification process

and over 70% agreed or strongly agreed that the scale assisted the superintendent in identifying the principal's strengths and weaknesses.

More than 60% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this step is feasible.

The SECOND step, the planning conference, received an overall positive rating by the participants.

94% of the principals and superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that the planning conference provided a forum for mutual discussion.

94% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that performance objectives were agreed upon during the conference.

The development of the work plans which include the writing of goals, objectives, activities, resources, and evaluative criteria is the THIRD step in the process.

91% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that goals, objectives and activities were included in the work plans.

Regarding the inclusion of resources and evaluative criteria, 78% agreed or strongly agreed that these were also included in the work plans.

Overall, 88% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the third step in the process is feasible.

Interim conferences during which the progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of the work plans is discussed are the FOURTH step.

84% of the principals and superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that the conferences occurred and provided opportunities for two-way communication and feedback.

The FIFTH step, the summative conference, received a very positive rating by the participants.

88% of the principals and superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that good work was reviewed.

Regarding suggestion for improvement, 84% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that suggestions were provided.

Planning for the next school year was initiated in 75% of the cases.

Overall, 90% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the summative conference is a feasible step.

Regarding the OVERALL process,

97% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the process encouraged communication between a principal and a superintendent.

81% of the participants, 76% of the principals and 100% of the superintendents, agreed or strongly agreed that the process assists in the identification of strengths and weaknesses of a principal's performance.

88% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Administrative Appraisal Process enables a principal to improve his/her performance.

The potential relationship between the biographical and school characteristics of the principal such as sex, age, degrees earned, total years as an administrator, size of school and level of school were studied as they related to the responses on the Performance Rating Scale and the feasibility of the steps in the Administrative Appraisal Process. Correlation coefficients, distance scores and t-test scores were analyzed and revealed that there were NO meaningful differences among the demographic variables.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The comments from the participants in the study as well as their written evaluations of the Administrative Appraisal Process confirmed that the process accomplished its major objectives, i.e.,

- to establish a communication system between the superintendent and the principal;
- to develop a diagnostic and prescriptive system in which strengths and weaknesses are identified;
- to assist the principal in determining goals and objectives;
- to establish a continuous program for appraisal of principals' competencies.

The development, implementation, and evaluation of both the Performance Rating Scale and the Administrative Appraisal Process were among the major contributions of this study.

However, perhaps the greatest contribution of this research is how it has affected the relationship between superintendents and principals and their collaborative approach to improving administrative performance.

During interviews conducted at the conclusion of the study, I was told by one of the superintendents that the process forced district office personnel to meet with principals, encouraged the discussion of differences in perceived performance and provided the superintendent with opportunities to let principals know what district office personnel consider to be critical components of principals' performance. Several other superintendents admitted that in the past they rarely worked with principals to improve their performance. These superintendents agreed that the developed process and its corresponding instrument will enable superintendents and principals to work together in the future.